(b) what is the target set for Visakhapatnam port in 2004-05;

(c) whether it is a fact that turn around time is too much at Visakhapatnam port;

(d) if so, what are the causes of delay in loading and unloading of ships in Visakhapatnam; and

(e) the steps proposed to be taken to improve the functioning of this port?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) 47.74 million tonnes of cargo was handled by Visakhapatnam Port in 2003-04.

(b) A target of 49.56 million tonnes of cargo has been fixed for Visakhapatnam Port in 2004-05.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

(e) Improvement in performance of ports is an ongoing process. Various steps taken to further improve the functioning of Visakhapatnam Port include de-bottlenecking of Ore Handling Plant, induction of higher capacity cranes, advance planning of ship movements, close monitoring of performance of vessels, development of adequate open space, insistence on the users to deploy adequate equipment, close co-ordination with Railways to ensure faster clearance of cargo and development of additional warehouse facilities for foodgrains.

Implementation of Merchant Marine Act

481. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the Minister of SHIPPING be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have invited any suggestions from the fishing industry on the need to evolve a practical system of implementing the Merchant Marine Act;

(b) if so, what steps would Government initiate to ensure frequent interaction and discussions with diverse fishery association;

(c) whether any interim steps have been taken by Government to assist fishing sector; and

(d) the details of steps proposed to create an excellent atmosphere to modernize the laws and regulations concerning shipping and fishing sector in India?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) to (c) India does not have any Merchant Marine Act. It has an Act named The Merchant Shipping Act, 1958, which deals *inter-alia* with matters relating to registration, safety and manning of fishing vessels. Two meetings have already been held with the fisheries associations, other agencies of the Government of India and the concerned State Governments where matters pertaining to fishing sector falling under this Act including safety of fishing vessels and training of fishermen for enabling them to get jobs in merchant navy were discussed. These interactions are a continuous process.

(d) The Government is considering ratification of Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel (STCW-F) and Torremolinos Protocol, 1993 which will streamline and promote the growth of fishing sector.

Sagar Mala Project

†482. SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD: Will the Minister of SHIPPING be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have formulated any schemes for construction during 2004-05 under the Sagar Mala Project;

(b) if so, the details of such schemes;

(c) the total amount likely to be spent on implementation of above schemes; and

(d) the details of the schemes related to the expansion of domestic waterways under the above schemes?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) to (c) Pursuant to the announcement on 'Sagar Mala' made by the then Prime Minister on 15th August, 2003, an outline of the Programme was prepared and in anticipation of Government approval therefor, an outlay of Rs. 24.48 crores was provided in Interim Budget for 2004-05 for activities to be taken up under the programme and the proposal for approval of the Competent Authority to the outline of the Programme could not be processed to its finality. The outlay of Rs. 24.48 crores for the Programme has been retained in the Main Budget 2004-05.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.